Lucas' Gift: Exploring the Importance of Self-Care

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LUCAS’ GIFT:
EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

by

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ABSTRACT

*Lucas’ Gift* is a traditionally animated short film focusing on themes of selflessness and self-care. In an alternate world where magic exists, lives a young boy from a small community experiencing a drought. After being gifted a magical plant growing necklace from the Good Witch, Lucas works diligently to feed his community. After working himself to exhaustion, he learns the importance of self-care. The artistic direction is influenced by works such as *Steven Universe* and *Craig of the Creek.*
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER TWO: SELFLESSNESS ........................................................................... 2

CHAPTER THREE: SELF-CARE TAKES PRIORITY ..................................................... 4

CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTERS .............................................................................. 6

Lucas ....................................................................................................................... 6

Good Witch ........................................................................................................... 8

The Importance of Community ............................................................................. 9

Diversity in Community ....................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER FIVE: MAGICAL HEALING .................................................................... 11

CHAPTER SIX: METHODS .................................................................................... 12

Philanthropy ......................................................................................................... 12

Inspiration for Self-Sacrificing Characters ........................................................... 13

Overworking ......................................................................................................... 15

A Day in the Town ............................................................................................... 16

Camera Direction ................................................................................................. 17

CHAPTER SEVEN: TECHNICAL PROBLEMS ......................................................... 19

Cauldron Smoke Effect ....................................................................................... 19

Reused Assets ...................................................................................................... 21

Glow Effect .......................................................................................................... 23
Heat Wave ................................................................................................................................. 25
Steam ........................................................................................................................................ 26
POV Blinking Effect .................................................................................................................. 27
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION ............................................................................................. 28
LIST OF REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 29
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Prajapati, Sonam, “Indian village boy”, Pixabay, 16 April 2019 .......................... 7
Figure 2: Gayle, Kevaun “Lucas character turnaround” Preproduction Development for Lucas’ Gift, 2023 .................................................................................................................................................. 7
Figure 3: Gayle, Kevaun, “The Good Witch exploratory sketches” 2023 ........................ 8
Figure 4: Gayle, Kevaun “The Good Witch character turnaround, Preproduction Development for Lucas’ Gift 2023 .................................................................................................................................................. 9
Figure 5: Priya, Rashmi, Types of Social Action chart, 2014 .............................................. 13
Figure 6: Gayle, Kevaun, “Rising Smoke Rough Animation shot” 2022 ............................. 19
Figure 7: Gayle, Kevaun, “Cauldron Smoke guiding shapes” 2022 ................................. 20
Figure 9: Gayle, Kevaun, Screen capture of ToonBoom Export Settings, 2022 ............... 22
Figure 10: Gayle, Kevaun, Carrot asset being placed into position in After Effects, 2022 .... 23
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Self-Care is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the activity of taking care of one’s own health, appearance, or well-being. In *Lucas’ Gift*, the importance of self-care is challenged by acts of heroism and generosity as the protagonist overworks himself. Lucas is determined to achieve his goal of providing food and saving his town, even if it means exhausting himself. *Lucas’ Gift* is a hero’s journey as well as an autobiography. A hero’s journey is a common narrative archetype that involves a hero going on an adventure, learning lessons, winning a victory with their newfound knowledge, returning home transformed (MasterClass, 2021).

Lucas’ conflict with himself reflects personal experiences that influenced the decision to create such a story. Lucas struggled with putting his own needs first for the sake of tending to other people’s well-being in a similar way I have through different friendships and relationships. This paper also explores the film’s development and inspiration, such as the idea of magical healing which plays a huge role in the film. *Lucas’ Gift* serves as a reminder to the audience to remain mindful of their own well-being. It is targeted toward young children ages eight to fourteen but can be enjoyed by people of all ages. This story will resonate with the target demographic because imaginary storylines like *Lucas’ Gift* can teach children social and emotional skills (the role of cartoons in Children’s lives by Iskanderova Shirin Daniyarovna).

The stylistic choices were inspired by the popular style of animation from the 2010s, colloquially called the CalArts style, or Thin-line animation. This style is identified by bean shaped heads and bean shaped mouths. Examples of this style are in animated shows such as *Gravity Falls, Steven Universe, Craig of the Creek*, and *Star vs the Forces of Evil*. The choice of line work was also inspired by the minimalist art style, which uses simple and clean lines and the
minutest details outside of the general outline. An artist who exemplifies this minimalist style is Ellsworth Kelly, who inspired the stylistic choices of *Lucas’ Gift* with his use of thick and thin lines in drawing plants and other objects. The style is reflected in the character designs as well as background designs through simple shapes for characters and minimal details in the background art.

In addition to the minimalist style, the background art style of the United Productions of America, or UPA, served as inspiration for the design choices in *Lucas’ Gift*. UPA’s style includes background objects that are intentionally not colored within the lines. This choice was made to represent the imperfections in Lucas’ world.
CHAPTER TWO: SELFLESSNESS

The main character, Lucas, is the hero of the story. It is in his nature to be kind towards others and put their needs before his own. This generous desire to put others first is also his downfall. It is shown that as soon as Lucas finds he can create food to give to others, he does not prioritize himself. Although he is just a young boy, he holds the values of a hero. As Joseph Campbell stated (Campbell, 151), “a hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.”

Lucas’ Gift does not show Lucas’ nuclear family because the purpose of the story is to demonstrate his desire to help everyone in his community. This is the main drive for Lucas overworking himself. His only desire is to see his community prosper. Lucas is an empathetic person. Lucas understands that they are all hungry. He cannot bear to see other people suffering so he is willing to do anything he can to help those who are in dire need of assistance.

Lucas possesses a heroic imagination. This means that before he acts, he imagines situations where help is needed and considers how he should act (Kohen, Langdon, Riches, 2017). With his community in need, Lucas chooses to search for help. His quest leads him to the Good Witch, who gives him the magic amulet. With the amulet, Lucas magically grows plants and crops to feed everyone. From one touch, leaves sprout on the branches of trees and they bear fruit. When he places his hand on the ground of an empty crop field, vegetables like carrots and cabbage sprout around his palm. Lucas begins to save his community by passing out baskets of fruits and vegetables to the townspeople. Lucas happily serves his town in the time they need it most and ultimately becomes their hero.
CHAPTER THREE: SELF-CARE TAKES PRIORITY

This story was inspired from a YouTube video by Jaiden Animations titled *Things About Relationships I Wish Someone Told Me About*. In this video, she compares our personal well-being to an “ecosystem”. “…You really can’t drop your responsibility to maintain your ecosystem in hopes to improve someone else’s. Who’s going to watch your ecosystem? No one. Because that’s your responsibility.” *Lucas’ Gift* was written as a reminder that even if one has everyone else’s best interests at heart, it is still important to maintain one’s own well-being. Promoting self-care as a personal priority is very important to me because I experienced the consequences of putting someone else’s well-being before my own.

The lesson of remaining mindful of one’s well-being is applied throughout *Lucas’ Gift*. He is determined to make sure that his community’s “ecosystem” is growing, and everyone has something to eat. He has no desire to focus on himself, at least, not until everyone is helped. His determination to help everyone, regardless the cost, is his downfall as he collapses from exhaustion. At first, Lucas is fulfilled in performing his generous acts towards the townspeople, but when he starts to feel drained, he is forced to rethink his situation. One cannot help others if they cannot first help themselves, and it does not mean that person is selfish for having the desire to look after themselves. Lucas should have eaten when he was offered food so he could have the energy to continue helping others. Because of the neglect to his own body’s needs, we see Lucas exhausted. He has no energy to grin, has bags under his eyes, and his body is shaking uncontrollably. The magic in his necklace, which is connected to his energy, is low, meaning his energy is low as well. A single plant can barely sprout before he collapses on the ground.

As previously mentioned, it is in Lucas’s nature to want to help as many people as he can. One of his flaws is that he is a people pleaser. *Merriam-Webster* defines a people pleaser as
a person who has emotional need to please others often at the expense of his or her own needs or desires. I was taught by my parents and educators that we should practice generosity and selflessness. If we were to put ourselves first, we can be perceived by others as selfish, self-centered, and arrogant. People find themselves tending to the needs of others in a variety of ways. One example is when one finds themselves making a moral responsibility and social obligation to help others at the expense of their happiness. Another is the uncomfortable feeling of being considered as selfish or self-centered if one puts themselves first. Lastly, there exists the simple tendency to please others (Misra, 2020).

The important lesson that Lucas learns at the end of the story is that it is not selfish to take a break and look after himself. It is important to save yourself before you save others. An example is when an emergency occurs on an airplane where passengers need to reach for the oxygen masks from above. Flight attendants encourage passengers to put masks on themselves before they look after their children. For most parents and guardians, it is common to look after their children first. However, if a parent or guardian tries to put an oxygen mask on the child before putting one on themselves, they may pass out from lack of oxygen and will be no help to the child at all. This situation is akin to the plot of Lucas’ Gift, where Lucas takes care of his community before taking care of his weak, hungry self and passes out from exhaustion before completing his tasks. If someone overworks themselves, they will not be able to perform a task as efficiently as the could have. That will affect the surrounding party as well, as they will not have the best assistance they required.
CHAPTER FOUR: CHARACTERS

Lucas

My main character is a thirteen-year-old boy of African American descent. The purpose for choosing this race is because as a Jamaican American filmmaker, there is a desire to see more representation of black people in the media. Most recent examples of young black male leads include Miles Morales from *Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse* and *Craig of the Creek*. These modern shows place an importance in positive representation, showcasing different sides to characters and allowing the public to connect with these characters more. An article by Nur Liana Roy and Nora Edrina Sahharil states that most black characters were previously shown to be rough and tough but more recent animations have showcased black men as sensitive and positive role models to children as opposed to some of medias’ more toxic portrayals of black men in the lives of their children. (Roy, Sahharil 567).” My personality is drawn towards these types of character and Lucas reflects that.

The drawing style of this film was inspired by many sources of media, such as the 2013 series *Mickey Mouse* and *Steven Universe*, where characters are designed with round shapes, large expressive eyes, and wide smiles. The appeal is important in this style of animation as the characters need to feel approachable to the target audience, children from ages eight to fourteen. Originally, Lucas was shorter with an orange shirt, blue shorts, and black sneakers. After character design exploration, he was altered to a taller and lankier form to reflect his hunger. He was also given different clothing after researching pictures of boys from third-world countries.
The patches on his shirt and pants portray Lucas’ state of poverty. The audience will notice this trait in the townspeople’s clothing as well. The patches on Lucas’ clothes are orange and blue, references to his original design. Lucas’ shirt is now purple that is known to signify magic and wisdom (Kryshko, 147-148), which Lucas acquires over the course of his journey.

Figure 2: Gayle, Kevaun “Lucas character turnaround” Preproduction Development for Lucas’ Gift, 2023.
Good Witch

The Good Witch role in *Lucas’ Gift* is described by Joseph Campbell as the Mentor archetype. The purpose of this character is to provide Lucas with the magic necklace to help his community. She also provides him with aid after he overworks himself, teaching him the importance of his well-being. The creation of this character stemmed from the early stages of planning the setting of my film. In one concept, the story would have taken place in an underwater ancient ruin and a dying coral reef. The hero would have met a magical sea witch who grants him the same powers as Lucas received. Her color and design were inspired by mermaids and the lionfish, which is a nonnative species in the Southeast United States and the Caribbean (US Department of Commerce, 2013). The Witch’s design stands out from the other characters, to emphasize that she is not from that area. In the finalized version, the setting takes place on land and the Witch appears as a nomad to preserve her identity as an out of place character. Lucas discovers her hut right outside the borders of his hometown.

*Figure 3: Gayle, Kevaun, “The Good Witch exploratory sketches” 2023*
The Importance of Community

Lucas is determined to seek help for his community because he considers the townspeople his family. He does not have an immediate family to call his own. The people in his community raised him and took care of him, so he wants to give back to the people that gave so much to him. Lucas is hungry, but the townspeople are the main reason why he decides to leave town for help. Because of this, the townspeople put their hope in Lucas to find the help they need. In The Power of Community “While the people perceived themselves as powerless in these situations, they did not remain fixed in a negative mind-set. Living under these conditions made many people put hope in their children’s ability… and find ways to improve their lives (Delgado-Gaitan, 150).

Diversity in Community

During the montage sequence, we see Lucas passing baskets of fruit and vegetables to different villagers. Their clothes are tattered and covered in patches, just like Lucas’. The purpose for including these people in the film is to show the diversity within Lucas’ community.
In the film, we see a young man of Hispanic descent, a tall elderly woman with her head wrapped in a hijab and a younger blonde boy. The diverse cast of villagers is important in *Lucas’ Gifi* because it shows how different races and cultures can live together and help one another. As quoted by Nur Liana Mohd Redzuan Roy and Nora Edrina Sahharil in the article *Racial Representation in Western Animation: A Media Influenced By History and Society*, “Modern day animations’ depictions of race and culture plays a different significance in the lives of the viewers; they act as modern-day representatives to the diverse society we have today. These shows in majority, mirror the everyday people and interactions with their fellow neighbours and community members (Roy and Sahharil 570).” The characters in my film reflect diversity in the real world. The characters also come from a personal desire to celebrate each race and culture.
CHAPTER FIVE: MAGICAL HEALING

_Lucas’ Gift_ is a fantasy story that contains magical elements. In many cultures throughout history, magic and magical objects have been used as a source of healing. This idea inspired me to create an object for Lucas that helps him solve his community’s problems.

In my 2D animated short, Lucas is gifted a magic crystal by the Good Witch that gives him mystical healing powers. This was inspired by the practice of crystal magic with legends that go as far back as the ancient continent of Atlantis. These practices spread across South America, Egypt, and Tibet. (Carlos, 2018). Crystals have been used as an ancient form of medicine, with philosophies borrowed from Hinduism and Buddhism. Crystals have been known to have healing abilities for the body, mind, and soul, ridding the body of negative energy and giving physical and emotional benefits (Rekstis, 2018). Lucas’ gem heals and revives plants.

One inspiration for my character’s healing gem is the clear quartz. It is a common gemstone that is valued for its high vibrations of energy that promote healing. It reportedly has been able to help tomato plants resist pests and diseases, such as blight as well (Larum, 2021). Malachite is a type of stone that represents fertility and abundance. Malachite also promotes new growth and change. Tanzanite is a gem known for healing properties which is an additional inspiration for the gem. The gem is pear shaped with the color and texture of malachite. As Lucas uses the gem, its energy depletes like the battery icon on a cellphone. Combining concepts of these stones and exaggerating their qualities to make something truly magical contributed to the design of Lucas’s healing gem.
CHAPTER SIX: METHODS

Philanthropy

*Lucas’ Gift* demonstrates what happens when one overworks when trying to do good for others. Lucas’ experience when using his magical powers to help his community was inspired by my own experiences of overworking myself to help those close to me. Lucas’ desire to continuously give to others can be compared to the concept of philanthropy. According to the Oxford Dictionary, philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes. While Lucas does not have money to give, he gives generously in other ways. He restores the earth’s ability to grow food, one of the most basic needs a human being requires.

In the article *The Impulse of Philanthropy* (Bornstein, 2009), the author states Max Weber’s theory that social action, which is the activities geared towards the behavior of others, falls into four ideal types. First is instrumentally rational, using expectations of results as the conditions and means for accomplishing calculated ends. The second is value-rational, which is valuing action for its own sake regardless of the possibility of successful outcomes. The third is affectual, meaning it is determined by feeling states or emotions. The last is traditional, determined by habit. Lucas’ actions are value-rational. Lucas sees his community in need, suffering from a drought, and knows he must leave to search for a solution. In the article, *Types of Social Action According to Max Weber* (Priya, 2014), an example used to better describe value-rational action is a soldier sacrificing his life for his country. His actions are not for fame and wealth, but the sake of values like honor and patriotism. This is the attitude portrayed by Lucas. His motive is not to become incredibly successful monetarily. He decides to leave his
community because he sees people suffering and is willing to put his life on the line, venturing into the unknown to find a solution because he loves his hometown so much.

Figure 5: Priya, Rashmi, Types of Social Action chart, 2014

Inspiration for Self-Sacrificing Characters

Lucas is a very generous character inspired by a myriad of people close to me such as my parents. I witnessed them giving back to family members, friends, and even strangers. They were very generous with me as well. His personality is also inspired by the character Steven Universe, from the show of the same name. The 2D animated show is about a boy who adventures with an alien group of women who call themselves the Crystal Gems. The team protects the Earth from enemies who desire to harm and destroy the planet for selfish purposes. Throughout the series, this character constantly puts others before his own needs. Despite his burdens, he does his best to help protect his world from enemies and help those in need no matter what the situation entails.

Lucas’ personality was based on Izuku Midoriya from the anime My Hero Academia.

Izuku, or Deku, as he is nicknamed, dreams of being a superhero in a world where people having
a superpower, or “quirk”, is very commonplace. The moment that truly became an inspiration for my thesis film was in Season Six, when Deku leaves behind his hero school, U.A. High School, to avoid being found by the antagonists. While he is away, he continues to help and defend those in need. He does not eat, sleep, or shower because he is so focused on his goal that he exhausts himself. Lucas parallels this. Even though he is not battling antagonists or getting into massive altercations, he strives to make sure every person in his village is fed while continuing to disregard his own hunger and depleting energy. The magic fades and he collapses from exhaustion.

In an article *On Generosity* (Raffel, 2001), Stanley Raffel explains that generosity requires that the person is not selfish. The article goes on to say that we need to be careful about how demanding a task can be because it is not always easy to act or recognize what it might entail. We need to know the specific demands. In my film, Lucas has an idea about what he wants to accomplish once he acquires magical abilities but does not realize the physical strain it will have on him, as he was not taught anything about the power by the Witch, nor does he have enough practice to comprehend how the power works.
Overworking

As Lucas continues to use his newfound powers, without any real practice or awareness of the consequences, he begins to overexert himself. This was inspired by my own experience of pushing past my limits to achieve a specific goal. While there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to push one's limits, it is important to know when the body or mind cannot work past a certain point. Everyone has a different cap and needs the chance to take a break and nourish one's body. A vehicle cannot run on empty. That is the lesson of the film.

In the article *Why Do People Overwork at the Risk of Impairing Mental Health* (Yamamoto, 2018), it is explained that it is possible that being overconfident can cause people to hold subjective and erroneous beliefs about mental health risks. The overconfidence effect, as explained by DellaVigna (2009), is a typical cause of incorrect beliefs. The article goes on to say that people are likely to consider their abilities "better than average" due to unrealistic optimism and miscalibration. While this study was mainly applied to Japanese work ethics, it can be applied to any person. If a person has the drive to do great things, it could be that some within that bracket of motivated people may push themselves far beyond their limits without pacing themselves or being fully aware of what they are doing. When reading that statement, I am reminded of the times when I misjudged my abilities and ended up negatively impacting the result in the end. In the same way, Lucas misjudges how much energy he truly has to complete the daunting task of reviving the community's crops. He does not realize that the magic in the gem on the necklace connects with his energy and believes the magic he obtained is limitless.

Lucas' drive to deliver good to his town stems from his desire to give. The desire to give as much food as possible mirrors the practice of philanthropy. His giving nature, inspired by and
parallels characters in other animated media, causes him to overwork himself to the point of exhaustion. These topics are very important because many people have the desire to give and push themselves to take on more than they can handle. It is important to pace oneself and handle each problem one step at a time.

**A Day in the Town**

Lucas’ community is in an alternate magical world. Modern technology is not apparent, so there is no internet or cellphones. The location of the town is very distant from other locations in this world. This is the reason why no help has come to Lucas’ town sooner. The location is based off a combination of lower income towns from places in the United States, Jamaica, Africa, and China. Those impoverished towns are reflected in *Lucas’ Gift* through old worn buildings.

Lighting is imperative in establishing the highs and lows through Lucas’s journey. The film’s opening takes place around midday. The story continues throughout the course of the day. The climax, where Lucas exhausts himself, takes place at sunset. This is because the time of day is parallel to Lucas’ energy level. As the sun is setting on the horizon, we see Lucas’ energy depleting as well. Lucas’s energy is at its lowest when he wakes up in the Witch’s home, when it happens to be nighttime. As Lucas continues to eat and rest, the camera transitions to the next day where we see Lucas at full energy and remaining mindful of himself.
Camera Direction

The camera movement is essential to *Lucas’ Gift* in conveying the mood in each scene of the film. An example is in the beginning of the film when the camera pans through the center of Lucas’ town. In this shot, the camera slowly reveals the insalubrious conditions that the people are living in. The buildings are chipping paint and trash is scattered around the ground. A food stand is barren because the crop field is dried up and cannot grow any produce. It is intentional for the camera to move from right to left instead of left to right, which is the common movement for Americans. The reasons were because of a recent interest in Japanese manga where the user reads from right to left and because it is against what is normal. What this means is that Lucas’ town is in disarray. The town is not in its normal condition, and the camera movement reflects that.

When the Witch’s home is revealed, the camera follows a trail of steam leading to the Witch’s home. From the outside the home looks small, but upon the cut to the inside of the Witch’s home, we see that it is expansive, because of the magical qualities inside the house. The interior begins on the cauldron with a ladle spinning around on its own. As the camera zooms out, we see that the Witch is twirling her finger, magically controlling the ladle.

Other camera movements have been used to express emotions. In the beginning of the film, we see a close-up of Lucas’ stomach grumbling and the camera tilts upwards to reveal Lucas’ face which shows hunger, desperation, and hopelessness. After Lucas goes into town with his new powers, we see a montage accomplishing different tasks across his community. As this happens, a clip of Lucas’ emotional state is layered on top. Beginning with a green background behind Lucas to represent full energy. Over the course of the montage, we see Lucas’ body language change from happy and upbeat, to slouched and tired. Simultaneously, the aura within
his necklace is depleted. The montage ends with a red background behind Lucas to show that his energy depleted, and his well-being is in danger.

In the climax, an upshot of Lucas trembling from his weakened state and bags under his eyes conveys the exhaustion he is experiencing. There is a Point of View (POV) shot of Lucas’ hands attempting to grow another plant from the ground. Lucas is swaying from side to side and his vision gets hazy before falling over and fainting. This adds to the dramatic effect of the scene and gives the viewer the perspective of how much Lucas has pushed himself. The POV shot continues in the next shot, where Lucas awakens in the Witch’s home and the Good Witch is watching over him. It is inferred that the Witch found Lucas and brought him back to her home to take care of him.
CHAPTER SEVEN: TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

Cauldron Smoke Effect

Lucas’ Gift is set in a 2D fantasy world. Because of this, the protagonist Lucas comes across a good witch who gives him a special amulet which grants him magical powers to save his community from the drought. Before the Good Witch gives the amulet to Lucas, she mixes potions into a large cauldron and dips the amulet into the concoction to activate its powers. My technical problem was that I needed to find a way to animate a 2D smoke effect for the cauldron.

To understand the movement of smoke, references were taken from a section from the book Elemental Magic: The Art of Special Effects Animation by Joseph Gilland. The author explains his formula for animating smoke (Page 94) beginning with a funnel moving in a flag-like motion. A ball would emerge to the top of the funnel, expanding as it rises. It is the same way real smoke would move in calm air, a heated source pushing it to the top and the cooler air above slowing it down and pushing it outward (Gilland 194-195).

Figure 6: Gayle, Kevaun, “Rising Smoke Rough Animation shot” 2022
Various video references were used to get an idea of how the overflowing smoke effect works in a real-life scenario. Then, a rough animation was made of the fog falling down the cauldron as little tubes to get an idea of how the smoke should be moving.

![Figure 7: Gayle, Kevaun, “Cauldron Smoke guiding shapes” 2022](image)

The cloud shapes come out of the cauldron as swirls to match the shape style. When animating the smoke coming around the bottom of the cauldron, there was an issue making a smooth transition of the disbursement of the smoke into smaller particles. It was recommended by instructor, Professor Christie, to draw in-betweens that resemble “splats” in the middle of the frames where the swirling smoke is at its largest point and the particle disbursing. As a result, the animation appeared more believable. It was advised to draw unique smoke animations and in-betweens for spontaneity between the movements instead of reusing the same cycle.
After animating the smoke effects, color was added. More specifically, a grayish-white color. Then the opacity of the smoke was lowered to sixty percent so that the smoke appears transparent. Finally, color was added to the cauldron and hide the rough animation. As a result, the cauldron smoke effects came out nicely.

**Reused Assets**

For efficient animating, assets that could be placed into a scene and used whenever needed were created. In some scenes, multiple plants sprout from the ground at one time when Lucas touches the area. These scenes are where this technical problem was tested.

Before creating assets, a rough animation of Lucas touching the ground and the carrots sprouting was made to get an idea of where the carrot assets were desired. The carrot roughs were hidden to have space to place the assets. To create the carrot asset, a separate file was made that focused only on the single carrot animation. The instructions for completing this task were referenced from a video titled *Export TRANSPARENT VIDEO in Toon Boom Harmony* by
LucasSaturn-Animation Tutorials. The way the editor recommended to export the animation from Toon Boom Harmony and make it transparent was to export the film as ProRes 4444.

To export, File >Export> Movie. Change video format to QuickTime ProRes Movie. In Movie Options, select Apple ProRes 4444, then check the box next to Alpha. Then hit OK. After Exporting the transparent movie, open Adobe After Effects and create a composition. The original rough remained as the bottom layer to understand the potential placement of the assets. The carrot assets were placed on the top layers, timed to start at different times. This gives the appearance of the carrots sprouting one by one.
The glow is one of the most important visual effects in *Lucas’ Gift*. When Lucas uses his magical healing powers, his hands emit a turquoise-colored aura in the shape of an orb, covering his entire hand. The technical problem was how the glow effect would be animated to follow Lucas’ hand. The object that would work as the glow effect was made by creating a composition of a teal circle, then setting a Gaussian Blur and turning the blurriness up to 1000 points. The opacity level was keyed, setting a pattern of alternating thirty percent and fifty percent opacity to emulate a flickering light effect.
The first attempt at solving the issue of making the glow effect follow the hand was to create a motion path in Adobe After Effects for the physical glow effect. The challenge with this method was that the directions were followed from different online tutorials were not successful upon execution. The motion paths created were not working as intended.

For my second attempt, a more familiar method was chosen. To make the glow effect follow the hand, the glow positions were keyed for each frame that the hand moved across the screen. This method is the easiest and did not take much time to complete for the few scenes in
which it appears. To keep the glow effect in position with the frame rate, the positions of the glow effect had to be duplicated so they were held the same number of frames as the animation.

![Figure 13: Gayle, Kevaun, Rough animation of glow effect in motion, 2022](image)

A third option explored was creating a mask so the glow would already appear around Lucas’ hands. The few issues with this method were that it had to be executed in Nuke, a postproduction software that was not my strength. Also, this method could not be completed successfully unless the shot is carried all the way through the pipeline to full color. At the time of testing this option, the film was not completely through the pipeline. At the time of completing my film, the second method of keyframing the glow effect in Adobe After Effects was used.

**Heat Wave**

Lucas’ community is experiencing a drought and to emphasize the barrenness of the land, a heat wave effect was added. The purpose is to display how hot and dry the atmosphere is. Reference was taken from an After Effects tutorial by Flat Pack FX titled *Heat Wave Distortion Effect - After Effects Tutorial*. To begin creating this effect, add an Adjustment layer over the original image in the composition. Then, create keys for Amount, Size, and Evolution. After, add
frames for Amount and add an Easy Ease. Set the Amount to nine. Then, set the Evolution key frame at the end to six. Finally, scale the size to twenty and add an Easy Ease In.

Steam

Steam played an important role in *Lucas’ Gift*. Lucas discovers the mysterious home of the Good Witch by following the path of steam up in the sky which led toward the chimney of the Witch’s home. The steam effect was hand drawn as a 2D effect in *ToonBoom Harmony*.

![Figure 14: Gayle, Kevaun, Steam effect with guidelines, 2023](image)

To achieve the specific effect desired, the online tutorial reference is the YouTube video *How to think when animating smoke/Puba 24*. By creating guidelines to mark where keyframes were expected to be, frames could be mapped out. A scheme was drawn, which is a central guideline to help the animator visualize the movement and timing. The blue curved shape around the central guideline, or scheme helps to keep the animation within frame. The black dots within the frame are stop points for future keyframes. After creating the keyframes, in-betweens were added, which completed the effect.
**POV Blinking Effect**

The blinking effect helps to show the delirious state of Lucas when he is most exhausted. In the POV shots, the visuals are blurry to emphasize Lucas falling in and out of consciousness. Originally, the effect was hand drawn in Toon Boom Harmony. However, the issue was that the hand drawn look did not look believable. This led to creating the effect in Adobe Premiere Pro, following the YouTube tutorial by Brooker Films titled *POV Blinking Effect – Premiere Pro*.

With Premiere Pro open and the original animated video displaying, select “New Item” then “Black video” from the Project tab. This will create a black layer on top of the original video. In the Effects controls tab, scroll down to Opacity and select “Create Ellipse Mask”. Once the black circle appears on the screen, it must be stretched out to both sides of the screen in the shape of a squinting eye. In the Opacity section of the Effects Controls, check the box next to “Inverted”. This will give the visualization of a Point of View Eye Squint. Then the shape can be keyframed so the blinking can be animated.

![Figure 15: Gayle, Kevaun, Blinking effect in Premiere Pro, 2024](image)
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Shows and films where the character learns, grows, and desires to help others have been the most inspiring. However, other themes have played a role in the idea of the story. Lucas' giving nature has been inspired by the concepts of philanthropy, generosity, and overworking. These ideas are very important because I have been surrounded by people with the desire to give as much as they can to those they care about. There have also been experiences where I pushed myself too hard and exhausted myself to complete a certain task, especially when it comes to trying to assist others.

This film proves that self-care is indispensable, especially in the context of tending to the needs of other people. After the audience watches this film, they take note of the lesson and reflect on their lives to see if they have been disregarding their own needs. My greatest lesson from this project is to continue to improve my craft and build a portfolio with stronger animations.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Carlos, Kristine D., "Crystal Healing Practices in the Western World and Beyond" (2018). Honors Undergraduate Theses. 283. [https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses/283](https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses/283)


